

REMARKS

In the Office Action, the Examiner rejected Claims 1-22, which were all of the then pending claims, under 35 U.S.C. 103 as being unpatentable over U.S. patent application publication no. 2002/0099796 (Chou) in view of U.S. patent application publication no. 2002/0120554 (Vega). Claims 6, 12, 18 and 22 were also rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112 as being indefinite.

Claims 1 and 19 are being amended to better define the subject matters of these claims, and Claims 2 and 5 are being amended to keep the language of these claims consistent with the language of amended Claim 1. Claims 6 and 22 are being amended to address the rejections of these claims under 35 U.S.C. 112; and new Claim 23, which is dependent from Claim 1, is being added to describe preferred or optional feature of the preferred embodiment of the invention. Claims 7-18 are being cancelled to reduce the number of issues in this application.

In rejecting Claim 6 under 35 U.S.C. 112, the Examiner noted that there was insufficient antecedent basis for the limitation “the purchase order” in this claim. Claim 6 is being amended to change both occurrences of “the purchase order” to “the requisition order.” Claim 1, from which Claim 6 now depends, provides the antecedent basis for the term “the requisition order” in Claim 6.

Claim 22, line 2, is being amended to change “a requisition order” to “the requisition order.” In this way, it is now clear that the requisition order recited in Claim 22 is the same requisition order recited in Claim 19, from which Claim 22 depends.

It is believed that the above-discussed changes to Claims 6 and 22 fully respond to the rejections of these claims under 35 U.S.C. 112, and the Examiner is thus asked to reconsider and to withdraw the rejections of Claims 6 and 22 under 35 U.S.C. 112.

In addition, for the reasons set forth below, all of Claims 1-6 and 19-23 patentably distinguish over the prior art and are allowable. Accordingly, the Examiner is also asked to reconsider and to withdraw the rejection of Claims 1-4, 6 and 19-22 under 35 U.S.C. 103 and to allow these claims and new Claim 23.

Generally, Claims 1-6 and 19-23 patentably distinguish over the prior art and are allowable because the prior art does not disclose or render obvious the way in which an instant messaging system is used, as described in independent Claims 1 and 19, to create a requisition order and to respond to inquiries about that order.

To elaborate, the present invention, generally, relates to a procedure for using instant messaging to provide and receive information about requisition orders over the Internet or other computer network. As discussed in detail in the present application, in a requisition system, it is desirable that the individual who has submitted a purchase request or order have continuous, timely access to the status of the order. One challenge for an Internet based requisitioning system is to provide this access. This challenge is complicated by the fact that, in an Internet based system, a requisition order may be acted upon by a number of people in different parts of the world.

One way to provide status access is to use a Web interface. There are, however, a number of disadvantages to this approach. One important disadvantage is that, in order to use a Web based solution, the user must log on to the web site, go through the profile creation process, navigate through the Web site to a search section, and then search for their order. This is time consuming and can be complicated or difficult for some users.

The present invention effectively addresses the above-discussed challenges. Generally, the invention provides a user with quick and concise access to the status of requisition orders and other information about their orders. More specifically, the invention provides an Internet based solution that is quick, simple and easy to use for giving users access to the status of requisition orders.

In a preferred embodiment of the invention, an automated agent is provided for receiving and identifying a set of inquiries about the requisition order and, for each identified inquiry, for preparing an associated response. A user transmits to the agent one of that set of inquiries, and the agent identifies the transmitted inquiry and prepares the associated response. An instant messaging system is used to send that associated response from the agent to the user.

In this preferred embodiment, the user initiates a session with the agent via the instant messaging system. Once this session is created, the user and the agent interactively communicate during the session via the instant messaging system to create the requisition order.

The references of record do not disclose or render obvious the use of an instant messaging system, as described above, to create and to respond to inquiries about a requisition order.

For example, Chou describes a system for generating a requisition order. In this system, a client computer system is configured to allow a plurality of users to access a server computer system. A server application, running on the server computer system, has a multi-tier architecture including first, second and third tiers. The first tier is comprised of client application code for initiating processing by the server application in response to input by a user of the client computer system. The second, middle tier is comprised of object-oriented server application code, and the third tier is comprised of shared access and data code. An application-programming interface is provided to allow customization of the user interface.

As the Examiner has recognized, there are a number of important differences between the present invention and the procedure disclosed in Chou, and in particular, Chou does not teach using instant messaging.

In order to address this deficiency of Chou as a reference, the Examiner relies on Vega.

Vega describes systems for facilitating communications between service providers and potential customers. More specifically, Vega describes a marketplace for services and/or packages of services, particularly buyer-driven service-related commercial interactions and activities. Vega indicates, in a very general way, that communication modalities used in these communications may include instant messages.

An important aspect of the present invention is that specific functions and activities are performed by the user and the agent via an instant messaging system. For example, the user initiates a session with the agent via the instant messaging system, and the user and the agent interactively communicate during that session via the instant messaging system to create the requisition order. In addition, that instant messaging system is used to send to the user responses to inquiries from the user about the requisition order. Vega does not disclose or render obvious using an instant message system to perform these specific functions and activities.

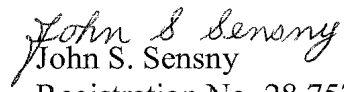
Independent Claims 1 and 19 are being amended to emphasize differences between the claims and the prior art, and specifically, both of the claims are being amended to elaborate on the role of the instant messaging system in the methods defined by these claims. Both Claims 1 and 19, as presented herewith, indicate expressly that, in addition to being used to send the response to the inquiry to the user, the instant messaging system is used to initiate a session between the user and the automated agent, and for interactive communications during that session between the user and the agent to create the requisition order.

This feature of the present invention is of utility because, as explained in the present application, this feature helps to achieve a quick, simple and easy to use solution for giving users access to information about their requisition orders.

Because of the above-discussed differences between Claims 1 and 19 and the prior art, and because of the advantages associated with these differences, Claims 1 and 19 patentably distinguish over the prior art and are allowable. Claims 2-6 and 23 are dependent from Claim 1 and are allowable therewith; and Claims 20-22 are dependent from, and are allowable with, Claim 19. The Examiner is, thus, respectfully asked to reconsider and to withdraw the rejection of Claims 1-6 and 19-22 under 35 U.S.C. 103, and to allow these claims and new Claim 23.

For the reasons discussed above, the Examiner is requested to reconsider and to withdraw the rejections of Claims 6 and 22 under 35 U.S.C. 112 and the rejections of Claims 1-6 and 19-22 under 35 U.S.C. 103, and to allow Claims 1-6 and 19-23. If the Examiner believes that a telephone conference with Applicants' Attorneys would be advantageous to the disposition of this case, the Examiner is asked to telephone the undersigned.

Respectfully submitted,


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